

The problem of blind spots

MAY 2005

The area behind your vehicle can be a killing zone.

Every year, children are injured and killed because drivers (in some cases, parents) don't see them while backing up. According to Kids and Cars (www.kidsandcars.org), a nonprofit group that wants to improve child safety around cars, backover incidents killed 91 children in 2003. Those deaths represented a 57 percent increase from 2002.

A contributing factor is that larger vehicles (SUVs, pickups, and minivans), which have become increasingly popular, have larger blind spots than passenger cars. A blind spot is the area behind a vehicle that a person can't see from the driver's seat.

To help consumers understand how large some blind spots are, *Consumer Reports* has measured the blind spots of a number of popular models. The results for both an average-height driver (5 feet 8 inches) and a shorter driver (5 feet 1 inch) are listed in the chart below.

To measure the blind spots, a 28-inch traffic cone was positioned behind the vehicle at the point where the driver could just see its top. As the illustration shows, longer and taller vehicles tend to have significantly larger blind spots. (The shading shows the length of each blind spot; lighter for an average-height driver, darker for a shorter driver.)

Bottom line: Your best defense against backover accidents is to get out of your vehicle and check behind it just before you back up. If kids are nearby, make sure you can see them while backing up.

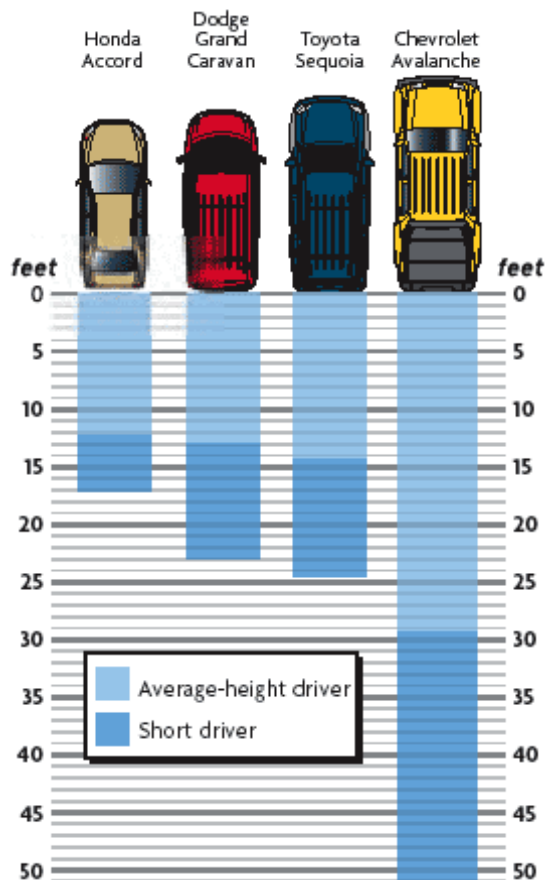


Illustration by Trevor Johnston

Blind-spot measurements

This chart shows the length of the blind spot of each listed vehicle. The distance noted is how far behind the vehicle a 28-inch traffic cone had to be before the person, sitting in the driver's seat, could see its top by looking through the rear window.

Make/model	Year	Driver 5 feet 8 inches	Driver 5 feet 1 inch Measured in feet, rounded to the nearest foot.
FAMILY SEDANS			
Toyota Prius	2004	7'	14'
Kia Optima EX	2004	9'	13'
Volkswagen Passat GLX	2003	9'	23'
Hyundai XG350 L	2003	9'	24'
Nissan Altima 2.5S	2005	11'	21'
Chevrolet Malibu Base (4 cyl.)	2004	12'	17'
Chevrolet Malibu LS (6 cyl.)	2004	12'	17'

Mazda6 s (6 cylinder)	2003	12'	19'
Mazda6 i (4 cylinder)	2003	12'	22'
Nissan Maxima 3.5 SE	2004	12'	27'
Honda Accord EX (4 cylinder)	2003	13'	17'
Pontiac Grand Prix GT2	2004	13'	20'
Honda Accord EX (6 cylinder)	2003	13'	23'
Toyota Camry	2005	13'	24'
Subaru Legacy L	2003	13'	25'
Saturn L300	2003	13'	27'
Chevrolet Impala LS	2004	14'	26'
Buick LaCrosse CXL	2005	15'	21'
Suzuki Verona LX	2004	15'	22'
Chevrolet Malibu LS Maxx	2005	17'	23'
Dodge Stratus SXT	2004	18'	22'
Pontiac G6	2005	18'	27'
Mitsubishi Galant ES	2004	19'	25'
Ford Taurus SES	2004	21'	23'
Mitsubishi Galant GTS	2005	21'	29'
SMALL SEDANS			
Chevrolet Aveo LS	2004	5'	10'
Toyota Prius	2004	7'	14'
Toyota Scion xA	2004	7'	11'
Toyota Scion xB	2004	8'	11'
Chevrolet Cavalier LS	2003	9'	17'
Mazda3i	2004	12'	22'
Suzuki Forenza S	2004	13'	16'
Kia Spectra EX	2004	13'	20'
Saturn Ion 3	2003	14'	25'
Dodge Neon SXT	2003	17'	43'
Suzuki Aerio GS	2003	23'	49'
LARGE SEDANS			
Buick Park Avenue Ultra	2003	9'	20'
Ford Five Hundred SEL AWD	2005	10'	16'
Ford Five Hundred SEL FWD	2005	10'	16'
Kia Amanti	2004	10'	21'
Mercury Grand Marqui LSE	2003	11'	23'
Buick LaCrosse CXL	2005	15'	21'
Toyota Avalon XLS	2003	15'	25'
Chrysler 300 Touring	2005	16'	23'
Chrysler 300C	2005	16'	23'
UPSCALE SEDANS			
Infiniti G35	2003	11'	20'
Subaru Legacy 2.5 GT Limited	2005	11'	18'
Audi A4 1.8T	2004	11'	19'
Cadillac CTS	2003	11'	25'
Volvo S40	2004	11'	18'
Lexus ES330	2004	12'	19'
Volvo S60 2.5T	2004	13'	19'
Saab 9-5 Arc	2004	13'	19'
Acura TSX	2004	14'	12'
Lincoln LS Premium	2003	15'	26'
Saab 9-3 Aero	2003	16'	29'
Acura TL	2004	16'	22'
Volkswagen Passat GLS TDI	2004	10'	15'

LUXURY SEDANS			
Lexus LS430	2003	9'	16'
Jaguar XJ8 Vanden Plas	2004	11'	19'
Jaguar S-Type	2004	10'	21'
Mercedes-Benz S430	2003	11'	22'
Mercedes-Benz E320	2004	12'	18'
Lincoln Town Car standard wheel base	2003	12'	21'
BMW 745Li	2003	14'	25'
BMW 530i E60	2004	15'	21'
Volvo S80 T6	2004	15'	19'
Audi A8 L	2004	20'	27'
WAGONS & HATCHBACKS			
Volvo V50 T5	2005	8'	13'
Subaru Outback 2.5i	2005	13'	18'
Dodge Magnum SXT	2005	13'	22'
Mazda6 wagon	2004	16'	19'
Pontiac Vibe	2003	17'	33'
Chevrolet Malibu LS Maxx	2005	17'	23'
SMALL SUVS			
Subaru Forester 2.5 X	2003	7'	12'
Pontiac Aztek	2003	9'	14'
Toyota RAV4	2004	12'	22'
Ford Escape XLT	2004	13'	16'
Kia Sorento EX	2003	14'	26'
Mitsubishi Outlander XLS	2003	15'	26'
Saturn Vue V6	2004	16'	22'
Chevrolet Equinox LT	2004	18'	28'
Honda Element EX	2003	18'	35'
Subaru Outback 2.5i	2005	13'	18'
MIDSIZED & LARGE SUVS			
Mitsubishi Montero Limited	2003	11'	23'
Volkswagen Touareg	2004	11'	22'
Subaru Outback 2.5i	2005	13'	18'
Toyota 4Runner SR5	2003	13'	22'
Acura MDX Touring	2003	14'	24'
Nissan Murano SL	2003	14'	25'
Lexus RX330	2004	14'	28'
Toyota Sequoia Limited	2002	14'	25'
Volvo XC90 T6	2003	14'	25'
Infiniti FX35	2003	15'	22'
BMW X3	2004	15'	24'
Lexus GX470	2004	15'	24'
Toyota Highlander	2004	17'	20'
Nissan Pathfinder Armada LE	2004	17'	24'
BMW X5 3.0i	2003	18'	34'
Mitsubishi Endeavor XLS	2004	18'	30'
Cadillac SRX V8	2004	19'	27'
Dodge Durango Limited	2004	19'	24'
Chevrolet TrailBlazer EXT LT	2003	19'	35'
Chrysler Pacifica	2004	21'	39'
MINIVANS			
Dodge Grand Caravan SXT	2005	12'	20'
Mazda MPV ES	2003	12'	24'

Ford Freestar SEL	2004	13'	16'
Toyota Sienna XLE FWD	2005	13'	28'
Honda Odyssey EX-L RES	2005	16'	27'
Nissan Quest 3.5 SL	2004	17'	28'
Kia Sedona EX	2003	18'	35'
Saturn Relay FWD 3	2005	19'	26'
FUEL-EFFICIENT CARS			
Toyota Prius	2004	7'	14'
Honda Civic Hybrid	2003	12'	28'
FULL-SIZED PICKUPS			
Chevrolet Silverado 1500	2004	23'	37'
Nissan Titan SE	2004	25'	42'
Dodge Ram 1500 SLT	2004	26'	35'
Toyota Tundra SR5	2004	29'	44'
Chevrolet Avalanche 1500	2002	29'	51'
Ford F150 XLT	2004	34'	45'
SPORTY CARS			
Hyundai Tiburon GT	2003	10'	23'
Nissan 350Z Touring	2003	12'	20'
Subaru WRX STi	2004	14'	21'
Mazda RX-8	2003	14'	19'
Mitsubishi Lancer EVO	2003	14'	31'
Chrysler Crossfire	2004	18'	22'
ROADSTERS			
Porsche Boxster 2.7	2002	2'	20'